

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 2204

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, CU, AO, NL
SUBJ: DUTCH AID TO CUBA: PRONK EATS A LITTLE CROW

REF: THE HAGUE 2180

1. COMPARISON BY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION MINISTER PRONK OF CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA WITH US LIBERATION OF EUROPE "ENRAGED" FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER STOEL. ACCORDING TO AFRICAN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL IN MFA, PRONK STATEMENT, WHILE NOT WELL FORMULATED, WAS NOT MADE IDLY. FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD CAUTIONED HIM AGAINST IT IN ADVANCE.

2. MINISTRY HAS GIVEN US ADVANCE COPY OF VAN DER STOEL/PRONK REPLY TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS ASKING IF STATEMENT REPRESENTED GON POLICY (REFTEL). REPLY, WHICH VAN DER STOEL PRESENTED TO PRONK FOR SIGNATURE AND WILL BE SENT TO SECOND CHAMBER TODAY, SAYS THAT THE STATEMENT MUST BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA IN THE WEEKS PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE WHEN SOUTH AFRICAN INTERVENTION WAS REPELLED WITH THE HELP OF CUBAN TROOPS. "MOREOVER, ON HINDSIGHT, THE MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION THINKS THAT THE COMPARISON WAS LESS THAN FORTUNATE. THE HISTORIC ROLE WHICH THE UNITED STATES
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PLAYED IN THE LIBERATION OF EUROPE DESERVES OUR APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE". REPLY GOES ON TO POINT OUT THAT DUTCH AID TO CUBA IS DIRECTED TO CUBAN PEOPLE AND IS UNCONNECTED TO CUBAN FOREIGN POLICY BUT WILL BE REVIEWED IF IT APPEARS THAT CUBA IS ESCALATING ITS ROLE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. IN A SEPARATE REPLY TO OTHER QUESTIONS VAN DER STOEL (ALONE) NOTES THAT GON IS FOLLOWING CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA WITH A CRITICAL EYE.

3. PRONK'S MISGUIDED DEFENSE OF HIS POLICY OF AID TO CUBA WAS SPARKED BY A RECENT TELEVISION DEBATE ON THE SUBJECT IN WHICH THE PROPONENTS TOOK A DRUBBING. STUNG, PRONK DECIDED TO FIGHT BACK ALTHOUGH HE WAS WARNED BY SOME IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT HE WOULD BE TILTING AT WINDMILLS. NEVERTHELESS, HE HAS STAGED A NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS INCLUDING THE RADIO BROADCAST WHERE HE WENT TOO FAR IN SEARCHING FOR A COMPARISON. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, HE HAD BEEN SPECIFICALLY CAUTIONED NOT TO MAKE CUBAN/AMERICAN COMPARISON.

4. CUBAN AID ISSUE HAS STRONG APPEAL WITH RADICAL DUTCH LEFT (PRONK'S NATURAL CONSTITUENCY) AND IS ACCEPTED BY ALL PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH LABOR PARTY MODERATES, CATHOLICS (KVP) AND CALVINISTS (ARP) WOULD PREFER TO PLAY IT DOWN IN CAMPAIGN. MAIN OPPOSITON TO CUBAN AID BY GON COMES FROM LIBERAL AND CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL PARTIES WHICH HAVE BEEN BADGERING PRONK ON THE SUBJECT FOR PAST YEAR. RECENT PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS INDICATING THAT DUTCHMEN WOULD CUT DEVELOPMENT AID IF FORCED TO MAKE FINANCIAL CHOICES WILL PROBABLY ENCOURAGE THEM TO CONTINUE TO ATTACK WEAK SPOTS SUCH AS CUBA IN GON AID PROGRAM

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